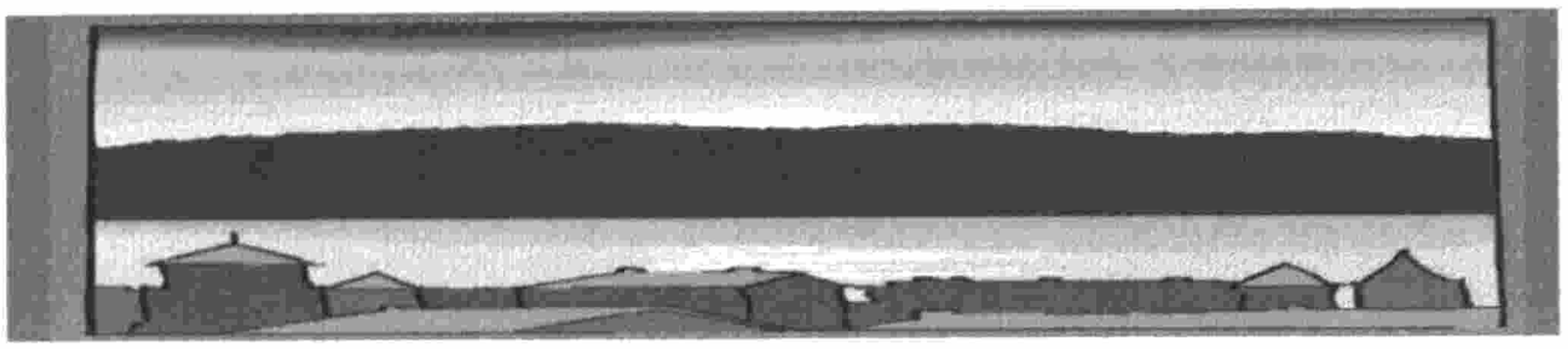
CHAPTER 10: WILLIAMSBURG REVISITED



"Williamsburg's Newest Holiday Inn" was the scene of the 1998 annual conference which occurred on October 11-12. It seemed that in alternate years a selective appropriate theme would be adopted to reflect the flavor of the presentations. This year, our title, "Managing Public Records in the Electronic Age", was to prove magnetic since it attracted a large contingent of members.

Jane Cross had worked diligently since the closing of the annual event in Charlottesville to select a supportive team, organize registration materials, provide for local arrangements, select appropriate menus, arrange for door prizes and speaker awards, coordinate a statewide mailing list, and a myriad of other details. The conference team consisted of a galaxy of firm supporters: Program-Dick Harrington and Bill Wolchak; Local Arrangements-Ron Livingston; Registration-Gloria Mills and Donna Foster (both from the Town of Culpeper); Speaker Gifts-Dick Harrington; Door Prizes-George; Vendor Exhibits-Martha Robertson (Fairfax County); and Mailings-Vicky Phillips (Fairfax County).

The Conference Chair's comments, in a message to attendees, substantiated the effort. "The staff here has worked very hard to meet our needs and extensive planning has gone into this conference." Another "gala night out" was scheduled for the group with the inclusion of a tour of the Anheuser-Busch Brewery which was coordinated by our very own brewmeister, Herr Harrington! Dick was also busy finalizing details of that effort during August of 1988 when he wrote to the Busch staff thanking them "for agreeing to allow our group to take the tour."

Perhaps, the highlight of the conference sessions that day was Dr. James Kasprzak, Records Manager of the United States Army, who was an expert in electronic records and information systems management. Other significant contributors to the training aspect of that meeting were: Whitney Minkler of MSTC, Inc. on optical media; Richard Moore on microfilm versus optical disk; Bill Neale of Zytron, Inc. on COM; and panel presentations from Fairfax County on computerized records center management and other local representatives on off-the-shelf software for records managers.

Our awards luncheon produced another VAGARA first! Three distinctive contributory members were recognized for service to the association. The Outstanding Member Award, which was first suggested by Bill Powell (LVA), was presented to none other than Dick Harrington, who received the recognition plaque directly from the

Virginia

Association of

Government

Archives and

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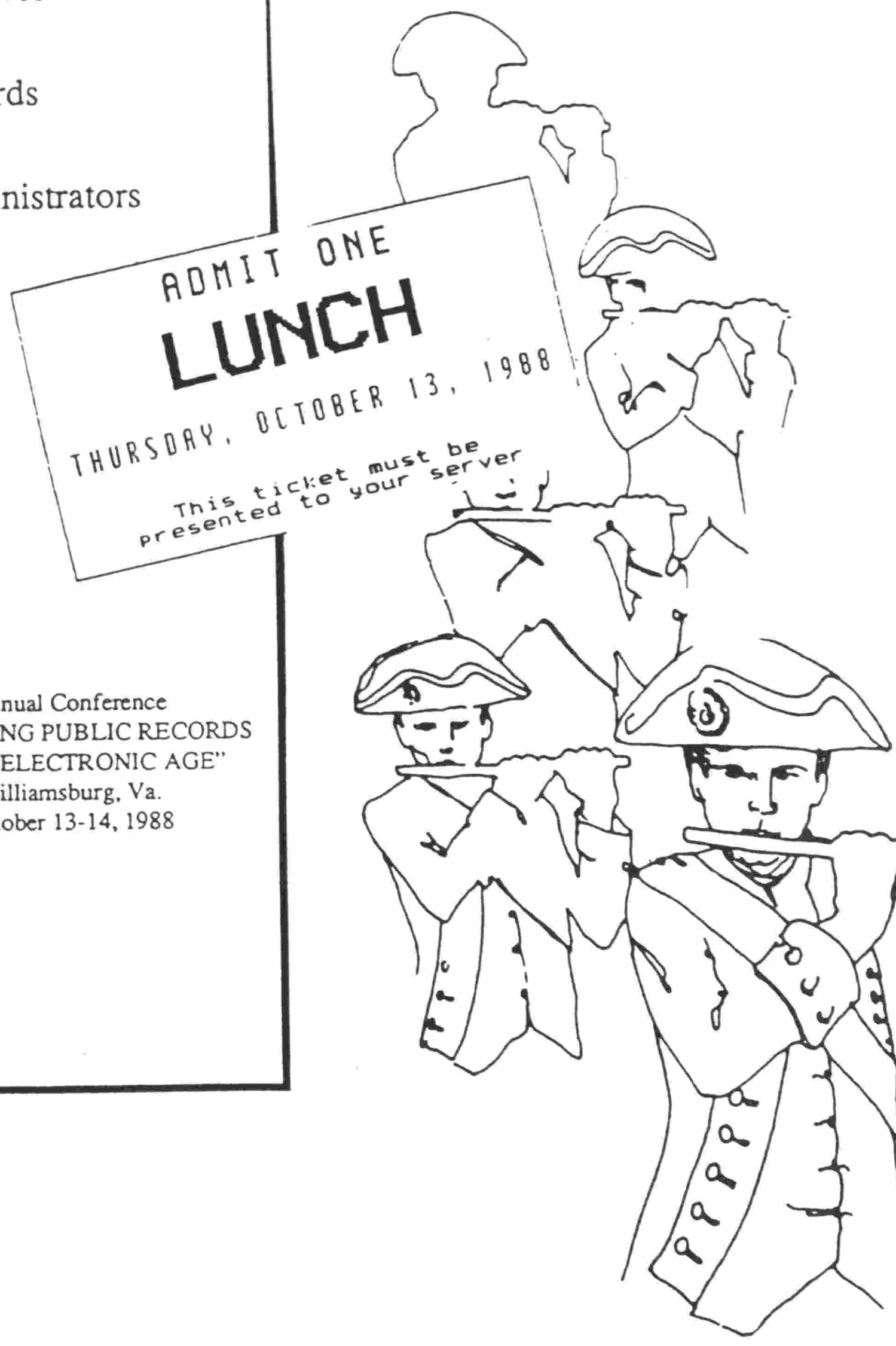

Annual Conference
"MANAGING PUBLIC RECORDS
IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE"
Williamsburg, Va.
October 13-14, 1988

Fig. 8 - 1988 Williamsburg Conference Panel for Registration Folder. It was our second visit to "Middle Plantation".

hands of Dr. Manarin. George then announced other award recipients: Lettie Neher, the first treasurer, and Bob Friedman, who planned the initial "Alexandria workshop", presided over the "organizational meeting" at the Ft. Magruder Inn, served as first president, editor of the newsletter and ex officio board member. To those initial recipients went the gratitude of an assembly who would not have been there had it not been for the efforts of those individuals. The VAGARA Award has been given to deserving members since that event in Williamsburg!

Other events, which can be recalled by conferees, were the "hot" and "cold" sessions because the hotel was having some minor problems with the heating in the meeting rooms. When I was introduced to the Patriot Manager, Charlie Brown, the idea of having our own Conference Chair set up a stand to offer psychiatric advice for a "five cent" fee crossed my mind. Maybe Linus could have been hired to play Beethoven during break intervals, too! Mr. Brown was most fair in handling the situation since he reduced our bill of fare by the amount of inconvenience.

According to the questionnaire responses, the return to Williamsburg was a success. More than half of the conference attendees felt the event met their expectations "to a good extent". Moreover, members rated the information presented as "moderately useful" to "very useful". The top five speaker sessions were: "However Electronic Records Affect You"; "Life Expectancy and Legality of Optical Disk"; Laser Disk Technology for Records Management"; "Electronic Records Center Management"; and "The Use of Computer Output Microfilm". More than half liked the speakers, found the sessions "very informative", the program organization, and the specific location. The next conference's locale was also suggested for "Tides Inn", "Tyson's Corners", and "Washington, D.C.". How about that for diversity?

For a second time in four years, the organization's members had conferred in Williamsburg with success. The first meeting in 1985 produced a constitution and by-laws while the 1988 session produced a net profit of "$1,363.20" and scattered sniffles.

Shortly after the Williamsburg event, the State Library and Archives sponsored a two-day workshop, "Strategies for Disaster Preparedness", held at Wintergreen (16-17 November 1988). This was part of a special statewide preservation\conservation NHPRC grant effort coordinated by Dr. Manarin and his staff. With the assistance of Lisa Fox of Solinet presenting the disaster plan training sessions and the Conservation Institute of Philadelphia (Pa.) conducting the locality surveys, the project involved many VAGARA members and accorded the association president a seat on

the Virginia Archival Municipal Preservation Panel or what Louis Manarin referred to as the "VAMPP".

1988 had been an active year for VAGARA...its officers and members. In a message to his colleagues, George thanked those who had supported the organization by attending the Williamsburg event and expressed his intent to strive for continued progress. "Let us resolve to work together", he wrote, "to promote enhancements in archival and records management...so that we will provide a strong network of dedicated professionals to implement mandated objectives..." Achieving goals and objectives were part of this close-of-the-year "Message from the President" to the Executive Committee. "I look forward to working with all of you", stressed George, "in the coming year in the promotion and implementation of new projects that will improve the organization and provide new opportunities for others to participate in this common goal."